

# Why 'Fauxductivity' is Taking Hold, and What HR Needs to Do

HR Executive | Tom Starner | September 25, 2024

New buzzwords are somewhat common within the HR world—but that doesn't mean HR leaders can ignore them, experts say. This is especially true when such catchphrases relate to employee wellness, like the latest: fauxductivity. Simply defined, fauxductivity describes employees faking productivity while on the job—particularly empowered by remote and hybrid settings. According to recent research by Workhuman, while two-thirds of employees deny faking productivity, nearly half of managers say it's a common problem.

The shift away from in-person work, however, isn't necessarily at the root of fauxductivity, according to recent research from MyPerfectResume. Instead, researchers found that poor workplace culture and high rates of employee burnout are to blame.

## The link between burnout and fauxductivity

The survey, which polled more than 1,200 U.S.-based workers, reveals that a startling 88% of employees are experiencing burnout, a telltale sign of toxic workplaces, where there is extreme pressure to perform under unreasonable expectations.

"With that response, it's no surprise that employees are turning to fauxductivity as a coping mechanism," says Jasmine Escalera, career expert for MyPerfectResume.

Escalera says that by simply trying to appear productive, employees may be able to reduce some of that pressure, while also avoiding additional tasks getting piled onto their to-do lists.

"Fauxductivity may provide employees a much-needed mental break without stepping away from work entirely," she says. "But, of course, this is a temporary fix that never addresses the major reason why the recharge is needed."

## Ways to drive genuine productivity

HR leaders, she says, need to understand the reason beneath fauxductivity—and work to provide the support employees need.

"Most of all, that means promoting wellbeing and work/life balance," she says. A wellness-focused culture can involve:

- clear boundaries around work hours;
- leaders who discourage after-hours communication;
- policies that support work breaks; and
- flexible schedules or remote work options wherever possible.

"Practicing this kind of human-first approach in the workplace could boost real productivity, rather having employees who 'fake it' at work," she says.

HR can also encourage an open dialogue about employees' workload and how it affects their stress levels. Employees must have a "safe way" to express these concerns, she says, noting that managers should be trained to have such discussions with their team members and teach their reports how to prioritize work in a healthy way.

"Creating an environment where employees can openly discuss productivity, workload balance and stress allows them to address issues before reaching burnout, potentially reducing the desire to engage in fauxductivity as a coping mechanism," she says.

Examining the work itself can also help, Escalera says, noting that assignments that align with personal development goals can drive productivity. She adds that focusing on employee development shows employees how they fit in with the organization's overall mission and objectives.

"Employees who see how their contribution at work connects to their own personal development targets could be more inclined to naturally boost their productivity, innovation and creativity, and start to reduce—if not eliminate—fauxductivity," Escalera says.